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*Published for the  
Bexley Christadelphian Ecclesia (Dawn Fellowship)  
by*



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PO Box 760  
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DA5 1UB, England*

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VOLUME SEVENTEEN

NUMBER NINE

MAY/JUNE 2002

## CONTENTS

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Christadelphians	page 1
Current Affairs and Bible Prophecy	page 3
Technical Editor	page 10
What did Jesus mean	page 11
News & Views	page 19
Christadelphian Beliefs	page 21
Bible Cities	page 22

COVER PICTURE: Gerbera Daisies



# Christadelphians

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THE NAME CHRISTADELPHIAN simply means '*brethren in Christ*' and we are an entirely lay community with active groups in the United Kingdom and many other parts of the world. We do not have a headquarters like Canterbury or Rome, but co-operate together in the work of maintaining the faith and preaching the gospel. The gospel we preach is a true reflection of the beliefs and practices of the first century Christian church. The Christadelphians' aim in life is two-fold – first to **know** God's will and secondly to **do** it. We believe that the will of God is revealed only in His Word the Bible. Therefore the reading and understanding of the Bible is of primary importance.

Faith has to be established on reason – it is not instinctive. As the Bible says, '*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*' [Romans 10.17] The Lord Jesus frequently rebuked his contemporaries for their ignorance of the Scriptures and pointed out that their problems rose from their lack of knowledge of God's Word. Hence the Christadelphian's insistence on reading and understanding the Bible. We endeavour to read a portion of the Scriptures every day using a plan which enables us to read the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in the course of twelve months.

Christadelphians believe in one God, the Creator of all things and the Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, who from the beginning was the central feature of God's plan for the world. We do not however, believe that Jesus Christ existed before he was miraculously conceived and born of the virgin Mary. We believe that by his sinless life, during which he overcame in himself all the weakness and temptations of the flesh, he laid the foundation for our salvation from sin and death. By his sacrifice on the cross he died as our representative, not as our substitute, since in spite of his life and death we still die, but now live in the hope of the glorious resurrection from the dead.

By his resurrection from the dead, which we believe was a physical, bodily resurrection, God has given us an example of the true Christian hope. We believe that death is a cul-de-sac in which there is unconsciousness and from which the only way out is by the resurrection of the body. Further, we

believe the Lord's resurrection is God's guarantee that He will send Jesus a second time, not as a suffering servant to live and die for the sins of the world but as King of Kings. At that time *'the kingdoms of this world (will) become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. [Revelation 11.15]*

Christadelphians believe in the promise of God, that those who accept this good news which is the meaning of the word '*gospel*', can share in the glory that shall be revealed in the earth when God's kingdom comes and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. We believe that God has made known certain conditions which it is vital that the Christian accepts. These are firstly, that *'without faith it is impossible to please (God).'*' [*Hebrews 11.6*] and that the basis of faith is knowledge and belief. Secondly, that *'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.'* [*Mark 16.16*] That is, belief comes first, followed by baptism. If we neglect these two fundamental principles, we are not Christians in the Bible sense.

Christadelphians believe that the Christian must be a light in this dark world which knows neither God nor the power of His Word. He or she must be active in overcoming evil, first in themselves by doing positive good, then by good example, seek to guide and influence others. Difficult as it may be, we believe that the use of violence against our fellows is un-Christlike, as is also the refraining of doing good when it is in our power to do so. The knowledge of God, received from His Word is, we believe, profitable for directing a person's life in the right way, not necessarily right in man's eyes, but right in God's eyes. Giving honour to God is of the greatest possible benefit to the individual and his neighbour. Without this source of Divine wisdom, every man can only do what is right in his own eyes.

As the Lord Jesus gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, so we believe that only the Word of God can enlighten the mind. With this gift of seeing and hearing a Christian is equipped to live, not just to exist. We can then through faith, stand firm and secure in all the experiences of life, looking beyond the temporary interruption of death to resurrection and immortality at the coming of the Lord. This briefly, is the basis of our belief and the foundation of all our hopes. To know the will of God is not a 'once-off' gaining of technical expertise – it is the dedication of a life to His will and purpose. It is our desire to impart something of the enthusiasm and joy that this knowledge brings, to you, the readers of this magazine.



# Current & Bible Prophecy

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IN JUNE 2002 the United Kingdom and many parts of the Commonwealth will be celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Her father King George VI, died on 6 February 1952 and his daughter Elizabeth Alexandra Mary acceded to the throne at the age of 25.

The actual Jubilee date was therefore 6 February 2002 when Her Majesty had reigned for exactly 50 years. However, the coronation did not take place until June 1953. The country was still recovering from the effects of the Second World War. The economy of the country had been severely affected by the war. Bombing had damaged Westminster Abbey, the place where coronations are tradition-ally held



*The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey in June 1953.*

and restoration work would not be completed in time for a coronation during 1952. It was therefore decided to hold the event during 1953.

The weather in Britain in February can be bleak and it was not considered suitable to use the first anniversary date of the accession because of this. It was decided to hold the coronation in June when better weather might be anticipated. Even then the choice of date was not easy. A Monday event was ruled out because it meant too many people would have to travel on a Sunday, something that was then regarded by many people as an unsuitable way to spend what they regarded as a day for religious worship. The coronation was eventually arranged for Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June so that it did not clash with the Epsom horse race - the famous Derby, which was to be held on the following day, an event which royalty have regularly attended.

The celebration of the Jubilee has been timed to coincide with the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the actual coronation.

### A CHANGING WORLD

How times have changed over the last fifty years! Nowadays the majority of people in the United Kingdom seem to regard Sunday as being no different from any other day. Most shops are now open, football league matches are played and horse races are run – all things which would have been unimaginable in 1952, when Sunday was still regarded as a day of rest and a time to worship God. Today there would be no complaints about the need to travel on a Sunday. Few regard Sunday as a day to worship God.

In the 50 years of her reign, Her Majesty has seen many changes both at home and abroad. In particular she has witnessed the final breaking up of the British Empire and the granting of independence to former British Colonies. One of the particular features of her reign has been the way in which, as head of State, she has held the Commonwealth together and been a source of wisdom and encouragement to many Commonwealth leaders. Part of the jubilee celebrations will consist of visits by the Queen to various parts of the Commonwealth.

### THE CORONATION CEREMONY

During the coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey, at the time when the Queen was anointed, the choir sang an anthem, written by the composer Handel and appropriately called '*Zadok the Priest*.'



It includes these words: '*Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon King and all the people rejoiced and said God save the king! Long live the king! May the king live for ever, Amen, Allelujah.*'

The Queen, who is understood to be knowledgeable about the Scriptures, would probably be aware that the words are based on a verse in the Bible, which says:

'...let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.' [1 Kings 1.34]

Solomon was the son of David, king of Israel who decreed that Solomon should be anointed king shortly before his own death. David had reigned over Israel for 40 years. We note that he did not include the words '*May the king live for ever*' in his instructions concerning what should be done.

Neither Solomon nor Queen Elizabeth, would at their coronations, have had any thought of living forever for they, like every other human being, would be subject to mortality. Solomon actually reigned for 40 years before he died and so Queen Elizabeth has reigned for longer than either David or Solomon.

### THE KING WHO WILL REIGN FOR EVER

When Handel wrote the anthem '*Zadok the Priest*,' he did not just pluck the idea of the king living forever from the air. With his own knowledge of the Bible he was aware of an important promise that God had made to King David. The account of this promise can be found in the second book of Samuel chapter seven. We can read the words that Nathan the prophet was commanded by God to say to King David:

'And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put

away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.' [2 Samuel 7.12-16]

The message of Nathan to David was to tell him what would happen to the throne of Israel after his death. It was made quite clear to David that he would not reign forever. However David was reassured that he would have a son who would reign on his throne. Note the passage says: *'I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.'* It does not say that David's immediate son will reign forever. In writing his anthem and adding the words *'may the king live for ever'* the composer Handel was using a degree of poetic licence with regard to the original text.

If we study the history of Israel we find that Solomon the son of David did not live forever. We also learn that the monarchy ceased to exist when invading armies overran Israel and the people were taken captive, first to Assyria and later to Babylon. So how was this prophecy of Nathan to be fulfilled? History would appear to indicate that it was a false prophecy - but that is not possible with Biblical prophecy. God made this declaration through the prophet Isaiah concerning His Word: *'...it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please...'* [Isaiah 55.11]

Nathan was not the only prophet to say that the throne of David would continue forever. The prophet Isaiah also tells us in his prophecy:

*'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.'* [Isaiah 9.6,7]

These words were also set to music by Handel in his oratorio *'The Messiah'* and they are frequently sung at Christmas time in relation to the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah or anointed king of Israel. Lest we should



have any doubt that these words refer to Jesus, we are given an account in the gospel record through Luke that makes the message clear. It is the record of the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary when she was told that she would become the mother of Jesus. We read:

‘And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.’ [Luke 1.26,27]

We note from this passage that Joseph was of the house of David, which means that he was a descendant of David. Then we read the message of the angel to Mary who was also directly descended from David:

‘And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou has found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.’ [Luke 1.30-33]

So this was to be the way in which the prophecy of Nathan to David was to be fulfilled. Jesus would be the man that would sit on his throne forever. The disciples of Jesus recognised that he would fulfil the prophecy. After his resurrection from the dead they asked him:

‘...Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ [Acts 1.6]

It is not surprising that, having seen the suffering that Jesus underwent before and during his crucifixion and then the joy of seeing him restored to them again, that they should expect that he would quickly take his throne. The answer that they received to their question was not what they expected. Jesus said:

‘...It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power’ [Acts 1.7]

Their surprise though, did not finish here, for the book of Acts continues:

‘And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.’ [Acts 1.9-11]

The prophetic words of Nathan to David and those of Isaiah and the angel Gabriel to Mary remained unfulfilled to this day. The prediction of the two angels who spoke to the disciples when Jesus was taken up from them also remains unfulfilled as Jesus has not yet returned to the Earth.

#### WHEN WILL THE KING COME?

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth we have a Queen who has reigned for 50 years to become nearly the longest reigning monarch on the British throne. Yet her reign will not last forever. There has long been discussion about whether she will abdicate in favour of her son. It has also been suggested that the throne might pass directly to her grandson Prince William. All of these discussions are from the minds of men who are unable to predict future events. In contrast, the promises about the succession to the throne of David come from God himself and are certain of fulfilment.

The time will come when Jesus will return. He will restore the throne of the house of David to Jerusalem and he will take his rightful place as king on that throne. He will not just be the king of Israel but the king of the whole world.

It is nearly 2,000 years since Jesus was taken up into heaven so you may wonder when his return might take place. In the reply that Jesus gave his disciples who asked when he was to re-establish the throne of Israel, he told them that the timing of that event was in the power of his Father. He had made a similar comment to them much earlier and before his death and resurrection. Speaking of the time when he would return Jesus said:



‘But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.’ [Matthew 24.36,37]

### THE DAYS OF NOAH

The words of Jesus direct us to consider the events that led up to the great flood of Noah’s day. We read in the first book of the Bible:

‘The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.’ [Genesis 6.11-13]

That description of the earth at the time of Noah could so easily be applied to the world of today. There is violence and corruption almost everywhere. In some countries it is the violence of war and internal civil strife. It often involves corruption at the highest levels of authority whether in government or the world of business. In other countries it is the ongoing effect of years of division and resentment. Elsewhere violence is the result of the sinful craving for drugs and the need to raise money to pay for the next ‘fix’. Others, in the name of religion, see warfare as their means of achieving martyrdom at the expense of their own lives as well as the lives of others.

Do we live in days like those of the times of Noah? It seems more than likely that we do and, if that is the case, then the return of Jesus Christ to the earth cannot be far away. It will be the time when God will once again intervene in the affairs of the world to rid it of that violence and corruption.

Noah gave his neighbours the opportunity to repent from their wickedness and follow his example. None heeded his call until the waters began to rise and his ark, which he built in the face of their derision, started to float. Then his neighbours called on him to rescue them but it was too late. The door of the ark was shut and sealed by God. Apart from Noah and his family, there was to be no escape from the rising waters.

Now is the time to turn to God and to follow the teaching and example of Jesus. His coronation is not far away and he will soon dispense wise judgement. Now is the time to pledge allegiance to him. One day it will be too late to do so. Those who prefer the corruption and violence of today's world, and who put their trust in the monarchs and rulers of this age, will find that they may have no escape from the destruction that will be necessary before the reign of Jesus begins.

As we mark the jubilee of Queen Elizabeth with respect and gratitude, let us look forward with hope to the time when it will be appropriate to use the words of the composer Handel in relation to the coronation of God's son on David's throne in Jerusalem:

'May the king live for ever.'

John Hitches  
Surrey, England

### Technical Editor

*It is with sadness that we have to report the death of our technical editor, Roy Hinkly, after a long illness. His hard work in illustrating and formatting the magazine even while he was ill, will be greatly missed by the Committee. He now rests from his labours in the hope of the resurrection to eternal life.*



# What did Jesus mean?

‘...whoever lives and believes in me will never die...’

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THIS IS THE second in a series of articles addressing sayings of Jesus, which are often referred to as ‘difficult sayings.’ The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record many of the sayings of Jesus and his discourse with his followers and there are a number of these which appear to be difficult to understand. This and subsequent articles will examine these sayings in an attempt to discover the meaning of these words of Jesus.

The objective of this article is to get you thinking, assist you in understanding what Jesus was really saying and ask you to compare what you believe with the teaching of Jesus. To accomplish these objectives we will take the following approach:

1. Examine preliminary conclusions about the verse.
2. Examine the specific verse in detail.
3. Develop an analogy to assist our understanding.
4. Reflect on the implications of our findings.

## JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

With so many distractions in our modern lives, we tend to be exposed to many ideas and subjects of which we have no substantial knowledge. When this happens we often draw conclusions that on the surface may appear simple and straightforward, but upon further investigation prove to be not quite what they seemed. There is no better example of this than religious beliefs, often formed solely by popular culture and what is heard at weddings and funerals. The particular saying we are going to examine is taken from John’s gospel record:

‘...whoever lives and believes in me will never die...’[*John 11.26 NIV*]

Let’s take a look at two common conclusions that are drawn by a simple reading of this passage:

- The Bible is inconsistent - We all die and yet this passage indicates that believers ‘**never die.**’ The Bible is no more than just an interesting book and should be ignored from the point of view that it is the source of truth about God and his plan for the human race.
- Believers don’t really die. Jesus says believers ‘**never die,**’ so we must live on somewhere else after death as we know it.

Both of these are common reactions when presented with this statement by Jesus. But does either have any merit? If not, what is the correct understanding of this statement?

Let us examine what Jesus really did say in this passage. To set the scene, we notice that Jesus was travelling to Bethany to the home of his dear friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus who had been very ill. However, Jesus had come because Lazarus had died a few days earlier. Martha had gone out to meet Jesus as he approached the town and it was during their conversation that the words we are considering were spoken:

“‘Lord”, Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”” [*John 11.21-26 NIV*]

### WHAT DID JESUS REALLY MEAN?

There are two critical aspects to take into consideration when examining any statement or passage found in the Bible - context and comparison.



**Context...context...context...**

The importance of considering the **context** of a Bible passage cannot be stressed enough and in this instance it shows us the simplicity of Jesus' teaching. Jesus is telling Martha that he is two important things:

**Jesus Is**

'the resurrection' →

'the life' →

**For Whom?**

'He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.'

'whoever lives and believes in me will never die.'

Quite simply, to those believers who like Lazarus have died, Jesus is '*the resurrection*' and for those believers living '*at the last day*' as Martha describes it, Jesus is '*the life*.' What then does Jesus teach here?

- Believers do die. They will be raised when Jesus returns '*at the last day*.'
- Those believers living at the time of the return of Jesus will never die.

Is this true? Can we draw this conclusion so easily? This brings us to the other critical aspect to understanding the teachings of Jesus - comparison with the rest of the Bible.

**Compare...compare...compare...**

When arriving at a conclusion concerning the meaning of a passage, we must **compare** this with the teachings found elsewhere in the Bible. If it matches, then it is likely we have a correct understanding; if not, then we had better try again.

So, is our understanding of John chapter 11 verse 26 correct? Let's look at two other passages. In the first passage it is evident that Paul supported the teaching of Jesus. He wrote to the believers at Thessalonica concerning the resurrection:

'According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the

Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever.' [1 Thessalonians 4.15-17 NIV]

Paul here picks up the words of Jesus to expand on this doctrine of the resurrection of believers. In fact, he provides greater insight into this event by informing us that those believers who are dead will rise first! Paul himself had to contend with those in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church who denied the bodily resurrection of the dead. In his first letter to the Corinthians he provides a detailed, reasoned argument to counter these false ideas. (See 1 Corinthians chapter 15)

Let us add to this some further words of Jesus in answer to a question posed to him by a Jewish sect called the Sadducees. In his reply he is teaching us about the time after the resurrection and whether believers will continue to marry in the age to come.

"But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive." [Luke 20.35-38 NIV]

In this instance, Jesus is again teaching that '*those who are considered worthy*' (believers) will be raised and given everlasting life. Jesus then goes on to show that this principle was understood as long ago as at the time of Moses, who, at the incident of the burning bush, showed his understanding that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were to be raised to life again. As Jesus said '*He (God) is not the God of the dead, but of the living...*' (Luke 20.38 NIV)

Are our conclusions realistic? We have drawn support from two of the many passages in the Bible and with hardly any difficulty have uncovered a fundamental principle of the teaching of Jesus concerning the resurrection. Why is it then that so many subscribe to one of the two conclusions that we examined at the beginning of this article? To help us answer that question, and to understand the implications of what Jesus is teaching, we will develop an analogy, using a favorite topic – food!

### FOOD ANALOGY 1

What food do people like? Doughnuts, pies, potato chips, chocolate bars, cookies, Big Macs, French fries, cheesecake, croissants, pastries, ice cream etc. Why? Because it tastes good, makes us feel good and fills us up. But are these foods good for us? NO! Why not? Because they are full of fat and sugar. Many, many people are too fat, especially in North America. These foods make up a large part of the diet of North Americans. Not coincidentally, Americans suffer from the highest rates of heart attacks, strokes and diabetes, not to mention poor fitness; all these having been scientifically linked to this diet of high fat and sugar filled foods. This seemingly illogical behaviour demonstrates our first principle:

- **Short-term gain is preferable to long-term gain.**

In other words the short-term pleasure these foods provide outweigh, so to speak, the long-term gain of health and fitness that would be the result of avoiding them. It is human nature to avoid truth where it will cost us something - in this case the pleasure of eating this type of food. People like to believe what best fits their current wants and preferences, regardless of the long-term consequences. Let us keep this in mind as we continue with our analogy to uncover another principle.

### FOOD ANALOGY 2

There is a small minority of people however, who have seen the foolishness of indulging in food that is high in fat and sugar. They have chosen to eliminate as much fat as possible from their diet and label anything containing fat as **'bad.'** But is all fat **'bad'**? Of course not. Scientists studying the human body have clearly shown that there is a type of fat, called fatty acids, which are labelled **'essential.'** Essential? Yes, the biological details can be easily researched, but briefly these fats (found in fish and



vegetables etc) are vital for maintaining the membranes of all cells, for making prostaglandin to regulate many body processes including inflammation and blood clotting. They also enable the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K to be absorbed from food and regulate body cholesterol metabolism. As you can see, they are indeed essential.

The practice of avoiding all fats (derived from the superficial belief that 'fats are bad') can be as harmful as indulging in too much of the wrong kind of fats. Simple rules and assumptions are often dangerous. This idea demonstrates our second principle:

- **Not understanding the details can be dangerous.**

This short development of an analogy concerning food has allowed us to state these two principles. But what are the implications of this as far as our topic under consideration is concerned?

### REASSESSING INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

With reference to the principles uncovered through our analogy, let's look again at the two conclusions we considered at the beginning of this article.

For proponents of the first conclusion, who believe that the Bible is inconsistent, we have shown, briefly, yet conclusively, that the Bible **is** consistent. A little effort has turned up the true meaning of the words of Jesus. Further examination will reveal many more fascinating aspects of Jesus' teaching. Why then, do most people accept this false conclusion and discard Bible teaching? Because the message of the Bible does not fit into their current wants and preferences in this life. If this sounds familiar, it is. Our analogy with fat in food allowed us to observe the principle – 'Short-term gain is preferable to long-term gain.' The pleasure (fat) of this life is seemingly too enjoyable to set aside. Individuals who deny the truth of the Bible are literally giving up life because the long-term gain to be had by following Jesus is life everlasting.

The irony of their decision to treat the Bible as a closed book, is that if they would only read it, they would discover many examples of those who gave up short-term gains because they were able to recognize the benefit of doing so. For example Abraham settled for the harder life in the hills, rather

than the easier life of the cities of the plain. His nephew Lot however, chose the cities. Sodom and Gomorrah were those cities and because of his choice, Abraham prospered while Lot lost everything, barely escaping with his life. (See Genesis chapters 13 and 19)

Joseph fled the entreaties of Potiphar's wife and was put in prison for his integrity. He later rose to become second in command over all of Egypt. (See Genesis chapters 39 and 41) Thirdly, Moses was raised in the court of the Pharaoh of Egypt but after forty years of luxurious living chose to leave in order to follow God's calling. (See Exodus chapter 2) He became the future leader of the Israelites, taking them out of Egypt to the land of Canaan. (Or Israel, as we know it today)

These three men benefited in their lifetimes because of their willingness to take a long-term view. More importantly however, they have secured the promise by God of everlasting life. Paul wrote concerning them and many others: *'All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.'* [Hebrews 11.13 NIV] These men did not live for short-term gains!

And what about those proponents of the second conclusion - those who are convinced that believers do not die? Once again, we have shown that neither Jesus nor Paul taught that believers would not die. The context of the verse in John chapter 11 and the comparison of this with other Bible verses show us the truth about death. All die, believers and non-believers alike and only believers will be raised from the dead and if found worthy, given everlasting life. Is it sufficient to believe that the Bible is important even though what you believe may not be the truth as taught in the Bible? Of course not.

The second principle we developed through our analogy was that **'Not understanding the details can be dangerous.'** Those who mistakenly have cut all fat from their diet are missing some **'essential'** substances. True believers cannot take a superficial view of the teachings of Jesus and hope that is sufficient. The truth is in the details. Believers can believe the wrong things and are endangering themselves. Do they believe that man doesn't die? Will they be ready to receive Jesus who teaches otherwise? Do they want to hear the truth of the matter? Or do they feel they have done enough and would rather live in a superficial world, relying on an understanding of death from

what they hear from a priest at funerals? Paul addressed this issue in his letter to Timothy when he foretold *'the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.'* [2 Timothy 4.3,4 NIV]

### THINKING... UNDERSTANDING...COMPARING

Now is the day of opportunity. The opportunity to consider the significance of the teaching of Jesus. The opportunity to think and reflect upon the implications of being a believer. To think about the principles we have developed here:

- Short-term living for short-term existence, or conversely long-term living for everlasting life.
- Not understanding the details can be dangerous.

By firsthand experience we understand the pull of the 'fatty' foods of this life which give so much pleasure. We don't so clearly understand the price that our bodies pay for this indulgence. Understanding the truth of Jesus' teaching is a matter of life and death - everlasting life and death. He is the resurrection and the life. Does this understanding agree with yours?

Jesus said to Martha:

"...I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"  
[John 11.25,26 NIV]

Martha did. Do you?

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# NEWS & Views

## A GOLDEN JUBILEE

THIS YEAR THE UK is celebrating a Golden Jubilee, a time to rejoice in the fact that Queen Elizabeth II has reigned for 50 years. For many loyal subjects it will be a time to rejoice that they have been privileged to have such a gracious monarch who has devoted her life to the duties imposed upon her by her royal position.



*The Queen's coronation coach which is being restored for the Jubilee celebrations.*

The Bible also tells us about a year of Jubilee. In the Law given by God to Moses, the Israelites were commanded to set apart every fiftieth year as a Jubilee. *'And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you;'* [Leviticus 25.10 NKJV] This was not just a time to hold street parties and other events to celebrate the lengthy reign of a monarch. It had a real

practical effect that gave many people a very good reason to rejoice. For example, all Hebrew slaves were to be liberated, all debts were to be cancelled and all land was to be returned to its original owners.

It may surprise you to know that Jesus proclaimed it as his mission to bring such a time of blessing on all peoples: *'The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, Because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives ...to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD.'* [Luke 4.18,19 NKJV]

The Hebrew word for 'Jubilee' is 'Yobel' which means 'the blast of a trumpet' or 'a time of shouting.' The theme of the Jubilee is there in the words of Jesus when he referred to his second coming: *'and they will see the Son of Man coming ... And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his elect'* [Matthew 24.30,31 NKJV] The same theme was taken up by the Apostle Paul in a message to the early believers: *'For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.'* [1 Thessalonians 4.16 NKJV]

The gospel message preached to Abraham long ago was that all nations would be blessed through Jesus [Galatians 3.8] This Jubilee in the Mosaic Law pointed forward to the Second Coming of Jesus to bring the *'acceptable year of the LORD'* and the time of blessing for all nations as promised to faithful Abraham. Paul told the Athenians that God *'has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising him (Jesus) from the dead.'* [Acts 17.31.NKJV]

The Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II will celebrate the fourth longest reign in 1,000 years of English history! In contrast, God's plan is to establish a world-wide Kingdom that will last for 1,000 years with Christ as the righteous King. When this occurs there will be a time for shouting and rejoicing such as this world has never seen - a Jubilee of Jubilees !

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## *CHRISTADELPHIAN BELIEFS*

- *There is only one God the Creator*
- *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*
- *The Holy Spirit is the power of God*
- *The Bible is the inspired word of God*
- *Man is mortal and dies because of sin*
- *Resurrection is the true hope of believers*
- *Salvation is only possible through Jesus*
- *Belief and Baptism are essential for salvation*
- *There is only one Gospel*
- *The Gospel was preached to Abraham*
- *The Jewish people are God's witnesses*
- *The Kingdom of Israel was the Kingdom of God*
- *Jesus is coming to re-establish the Kingdom of God*
- *The Kingdom of God will be on earth*
- *Jesus will be King over this Kingdom*
- *The reward of the righteous is eternal life on earth*



# Bible Cities



## HAZOR

AS YOU TRAVEL northwards from Galilee on Route 90 in modern Israel, about 8km north of Rosh Pina the road drops down into the Huleh Valley. On a bend in the road the huge mound of Tel-el-Qedah or Tel Hazor suddenly comes into view. This city was strategically located on what was the Via Maris or the Sea Road that connected Egypt in the south to Mesopotamia and Syria in the north.

Archaeological work has been carried out at Hazor, firstly by Professor Garstang, who made trial digs in 1928 and then major excavations from 1955 to 1969 by Professor Yigael Yadin. More recently excavations began again at the site in 1990 and are continuing under the direction of Professor Amnon Ben-Tor, a one-time student of Professor Yadin. All of this work has revealed twenty-one cities built one on top of the other by successive kingdoms. The site is in two parts, with the tell mound covering some 6.1 hectares (15 acres) and to the north a much larger plateau area of 81 hectares (200 acres). This means that Hazor was something like twenty times the size of Jerusalem in the time of King David.

The city is first mentioned in the Bible when news of the Israelites successful conquest of the southern part of Canaan came to the notice of Jabin king of Hazor. [Joshua 11.1] The record tells us that Jabin sent word to all the other kingdoms in the area to mount a challenge to the Israelite armies and it emphasises the importance of Hazor and its ruler as '*the head of all those kingdoms.*' [Joshua 11.10] These allied forces gathered at the Waters of Merom (today's Lake Huleh) but even these combined armies were no match for the Israelites with God on their side. They were soundly defeated and Joshua took all the cities, singling out Hazor for destruction by fire and killing Jabin in the process.

An amazing find was made in 1992 by the team led by Ben-Tor whilst excavating a palace area that Yadin's work had only partly uncovered. The renewed dig turned up a broken tablet with the name 'Ibni' inscribed on it. The name 'Ibni' is the equivalent of the Hebrew 'Yabin' or the biblical name of Jabin king of Hazor. The palace, the name of the ruler of Hazor and the tablet are all datable to the king of Hazor killed by Joshua who then burnt the city to the ground.

The city site was then included in the territory allotted to the tribe of Naphtali. [Joshua 19.36] When we get to the time of the Judges some 200 years later, the Israelites were once again straying from God's ways and we read that *'the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor.'* [Judges 4.:2 NKJV] This time God raised up as deliverers Deborah and Barak, who took on a formidable army commanded by Sisera at Mount Tabor. There *'the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak.'*

[Judges 4.15 NKJV] This victory is celebrated in the 'Song of Deborah and Barak' found in Judges chapter 5 and is mentioned by the prophet Samuel at the coronation of Israel's first king, Saul. [1 Samuel 12.9]



*View of excavations at Hazor looking towards Mount Hermon.*

The occurrence of the name Jabin in the books of Joshua and Judges has made some critics question the accuracy of the biblical record. However it is explained by the use of the name as a royal dynastic title (similar to Pharaoh for the rulers of Egypt) and it is quite possible that several kings carried the name Jabin during these historic periods.

The next mention of the name Hazor occurred when King Solomon raised a labour force for a huge construction programme which included the building of the storage cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. These cities were



effectively army towns or fortress bases and depots with storehouses for Solomon's chariots and cavalry. [1Kings 9.15,19] When Professor Yadin uncovered the gate at Hazor he immediately compared it with gates previously discovered at Megiddo and Gezer. He found their design and layout so much alike that he believed they were clear evidence of Solomon's great public works constructed by a powerful central authority, as the Bible record indicates. There is evidence that during his reign, King Ahab later doubled the size of Hazor. In the annals of the Assyrian ruler Shalmanezar III, are records of the participation of 'Ahab the Israelite' in a coalition of twelve rulers, with Ahab providing 2,000 chariots and 10,000 foot soldiers.

The Bible confirms that Ahab was a great builder: *'Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did, the ivory house which he built (in Samaria) and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?'* [1 Kings 22.39 NKJV] The excavations at Hazor have shown it was one of the cities extended and fortified by Ahab. They also reveal that the city was destroyed and rebuilt a number of times as a result of military campaigns from the north by the armies of Aram and Assyria. These incursions and attacks on Israel were punishments from God for their failure to walk in His ways. The Bible records how the Assyrian armies came down into Israel: *'In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took.... Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.'* [2 Kings 15.29 NKJV] This destruction of Hazor took place around 732 BC. and was probably the end of it as an important city.

Hazor is also mentioned in non-Biblical texts. Egyptian texts from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century BC record Hazor as a Canaanite city that threatened the Egyptian Empire. It is also named in the Mari letters of 1,800 BC. and there is a Babylonian text describing Hazor as an important political centre. Hazor is also mentioned in lists of the dominions of the Egyptian kings Tutmosis III, Amenhotep II and Seti I in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries BC and in the Amarna letters of the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC with the ruler of Hazor still being spoken of as a king. These records and the archaeological excavations all confirm the Biblical importance of Hazor and the historical accuracy of the Biblical accounts about events linked with the city.

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